

# PUBLISHING WORLDWIDE SRI LANKA

## Christian Literature Essential

"The Church in Sri Lanka needs Christian literature to grow," says Caleb M. Sri Karnakumar (lbcpub@sltnet.lk) of Lanka Bible College.

The primary work of Lanka Bible College is leadership training, but we also have a separate publishing ministry in view of the great shortage of Christian literature here," says Caleb M. Sri Karnakumar, head of Lanka Bible College's publishing unit.

"We publish textbooks, commentaries, and theological materials on such topics as the person of Jesus, ethics, and apologetics. Textbooks are for the theological students, based on their current subjects. To date more than 120 textbooks have been published in Sinhalese and Tamil. This has been a tremendous experience," says Sri Karnakumar. "Five of us work as a team with translators and writers who work from their homes in the local languages."

Lanka Bible College materials are well received. "One of our books, *Environmental Pollution and Our Responsibility*, was adapted for use by a Buddhist professor at a local university. We represent the minority view," says Sri Karnakumar. "We also publish

books on social issues, such as abortion or child abuse."

Literacy in Sri Lanka is some 90 percent, so written materials are an effective way to reach the public. "The target market, however, is the Church at large, both Protestants and Catholics," says Sri Karnakumar. "There is a devotional side to our publishing, with many books for beginning Christians. As the Church grows, in order to sustain this growth, more good Christian literature is essential."

"In 1996," he continues, "we began a little bookshop on campus to meet the needs of our students. This service has grown to a point where books and educational resources are imported and distributed to local churches, who often invite our publishing staff to display Christian literature at churches and conferences."

Sri Karnakumar flashes an engaging smile and continues enthusiastically, "We publish a magazine to motivate Christian writers. It is called *The Wave* and is published in Sinhalese (*Ralla*) and Tamil

(*Alai*). There are very few Christian magazines in Sri Lanka," says Sri Karnakumar.

"Our major strength is that as a Bible college we can encourage students to write for God. We want to prepare and train a new generation of writers."

"When persecution comes, people are afraid to speak," he adds. "Yet that is when our literature becomes even more important, particularly for evangelism. Speaking brings opposition, but tracts, articles and books about Jesus are very helpful."

Some 72 percent of Sri Lanka's population is Buddhist. The remainder is 12 percent Hindu, 8 percent Muslim, and 8 percent Christian. The country is officially a Buddhist state so Buddhism is protected and promoted. Minority religions are increasingly facing higher taxes and unemployment,

and fewer opportunities for education.

Reports of persecution of Christians, in particular, have been making the news more and more frequently.

"We need prayers," says Karnakumar, "because religious and political leaders are seeking parliamentary legislation to place limitations on evangelism.

"Yet, we are convinced that God will build His church in Sri Lanka, come what may. We hope our literature will be a small part of that building program," he concludes. ❖

